

# **Libby Community Advisory Group**

## **Meeting Summary**

### **December 8, 2005**

#### **Introductions**

Gerald Mueller and members of the Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

#### **Agenda**

The CAG agreed to the following agenda for this meeting:

- = Agency Reports
  - ⊗ EPA
  - ⊗ TAG
  - ⊗ St. John's Lutheran Hospital
  - ⊗ CARD Clinic
- = Public Comment

#### **EPA Report**

Peggy Churchill reported on behalf of EPA on the following topics.

General Cleanup - Cleanup activity has stopped for winter. This year to date, EPA has completed 227 cleanups of Libby properties.

Inspector & Supervisor Training - EPA is planning an asbestos training session for local contractors and cleanup workers at the college in Libby in late January or early February 2006.

Environmental Resource Specialist - The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is working to create an environmental resource specialist position. This person would provide answers to local Libby people about asbestos questions that arise during building remodeling or after the EPA cleanup is completed. The TAG has obtained a letter of support for this position from the Libby City Council and is seeking similar support from the Lincoln County Commissioners.

Dream It-Do It Conference - EPA is working with Sandy Matheney, the facilitator of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group, to put on a conference titled "Dream It-Do It. "

Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RIFS) - EPA will continue to publish articles in the paper that address both technical and policy issues that will be covered in the RIFS. Because it will contain the proposed plan for cleanup, the RIFS will provide the public and the TAG with an important opportunity to have input concerning cleanup issues. The release of the RIFS will trigger a 30-day public comment period.

Highway 37 - The source and responsibility for the asbestos contamination of Highway 37 has been discussed at recent CAG meetings. Public comment indicated that EPA contractor trucks hauling contaminated soil to the mine have been covered with billowing tarps and may be the source for this contamination. I did not answer questions regarding EPA's possible role in this

contamination because of concern about the ongoing criminal investigation. However, upon further reflection, I can comment on the likelihood that EPA trucks are the source. EPA sampling at the surface and six inches below it has found contamination including raw vermiculite along much of the highway. The contamination at six inches deep indicates that it would have had to have been there prior to EPA coming to Libby. Also, the fact that the contamination is widespread indicates that if EPA contractor trucks were a source, they would have to be continually dumping the contamination along the road. EPA is confident that such spillage has not occurred. Anecdotal information demonstrates that asbestos was present along the road shoulders before EPA began the cleanup. Because of the criminal investigation, I cannot comment on whether other entities such as W.R. Grace or the Department of Transportation might be responsible for the highway contamination.

*Audience Member Question - How much contamination is along the highway?*

Answer - The sampling found only trace amounts.

*Audience Member Question - What is the target date for beginning to ramp up cleanup activities?*

Answer - We expect to resume cleanup during the third or fourth week of February.

*CAG Member Question - What is the average cost of the 227 cleanups finished to date?*

Answer - \$25,000-30,000.

## **TAG Report**

Mike Noble and Dr. Brad Black reported on behalf of the TAG. The TAG is continuing to work on the contract with its choice for Technical Advisor, Dr. Gerry Henningsen. Once the contract is finished, EPA will have to review it. Because the contract is not yet final, Mr. Henningsen's appearance at this meeting to discuss the risk assessment had to be postponed until next month. The TAG is working the Operation and Maintenance Working Group to establish a closer relationship between the two groups.

## **St. John's Lutheran Hospital**

Bill Patton reported that, in response to community needs, the Hospital has added a pulmonary rehabilitation program. To receive treatment in this new program, a patient must be referred to it by a physician. Medicare and most private health insurance programs will not cover pulmonary rehabilitation, but the HNA program will. To qualify for its payments, HNA must pre-certify the patient.

*Audience Member Question - How does the HNA certification work?*

Answer - A Kalispell physician will provide the certification. We have a telecommunication system so that a local person need not travel to Kalispell to be examined by this doctor.

*Audience Member Question - What criteria will be used to determine the certification?*

Answer - Our local respiratory therapist will meet with the patient to assure that she or he would receive benefit from this therapy.

*Audience Member Comment - It is disconcerting that we must go out of town for a certifying physician rather than relying on our local health professionals.*

## **CARD Clinic Report**

Dr. Brad Black reported on behalf of the CARD Clinic on the following subjects.

Mesothelioma Blood Marker Research - Research regarding a possible blood marker for mesothelioma is underway with the participation of Dr. Harvey Pass, who is the chief of thoracic surgery for the New York University Hospital, and Dr. Steve Levine from Mount Sinai Hospital.

State of Montana Mesothelioma Report - The state recently issued a report on the incidence of mesothelioma in Montana which found that Libby does not have an unusual number of cases of this disease. The report statistics were based on Montana death certificates and tumor registry. This report results defies both local and outside analysis. This study did not accurately characterize mesothelioma connected with Libby because it did not consider people who were exposed to asbestos in Libby and have left the area. I am aware of seven people who died from this disease after exposure in Libby. Including these additional seven deaths would raise mesothelioma mortality rates to 80 to 100 times normal. Dr. J. C. McDonald from McGill University in Canada looked at mesothelioma mortality rates among W.R. Grace workers in the 1980's. In 2002, he reexamined the available data and determined that the incidence of the disease among Libby W.R. Grace workers were as high or higher than expected for chrysotile exposures.

Other Researchers - Other researchers from across the country have contacted the Clinic with an interest in possible research. Dr. Brooke Mossman from the University of Vermont is one of our research advisors. Dr. R. T. Park is interested in particles and lung disease. David Schwartz, the new director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the National Toxicology Program (NTP), is interested in genetics and lung disease and plans to visit Libby. He is interested in why some people who are exposed to asbestos become ill and why some do not.

*Audience Member Question - Any chance that these experts might establish a field office here?*

Answer - We would welcome physician scientists working here. Physicians seeing patients tend to set the direction for research.

*Audience Member Question - Does the state mesothelioma study fail to have accurate statistics on mesothelioma deaths because of a reliance on death certificates that do not accurately reflect the cause of death?*

Answer - The death certificates are not the problem; rather it is the failure to track people who lived and worked in Libby but have left the area.

## **Public Comment**

There was no additional public comment.

## **Next Meeting**

The next CAG meeting was scheduled for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 12, 2006 in the Ponderosa Room of Libby City Hall. The agenda will include a presentation by the TAG Technical Advisor, Dr. Gerry M. Henningsen.

## **Appendix 1**

### **CAG Member & Guest Attendance List December 8, 2005**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Group/Organization Represented</b>
Bill Patten	St. John's Lutheran Hospital
K.W. Maki	Libby Schools
Mike Giesey	CARD Clinic
Ted Linnert	EPA Community Involvement
Peggy Churchill	EPA Project Manager
Dr. Brad Black	Lincoln County Health Officer/CARD
Gary Swenson	Libby Volunteer Fire Department